

Wethersfield Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
Harbor Management Commission
Minutes - Thursday, March 28, 2013

The meeting was held at Town Hall and called to order by Chairperson Tom Ragonese at 7:00 p.m. Members present were Tom Ragonese, Richard Lepore, Jeremy Donnelly and Tom Mull. Also present was Kathy Bagley, Director of Parks and Recreation.

A. Public Comments.

Neighbors from the Greenfield Park area attended the meeting. Chairperson Ragonese welcomed about 18 residents. They wanted the Board to know about their concerns with the park. A few neighbors spoke representing the group.

Anita Jones – 77 Greenfield Street.

She explained that over the past several years there have been problems with young men using the basketball court. Mrs. Jones called Ms. Bagley this week to let her know the problems were starting up again. Ms. Bagley notified the police and the police informed her that they were going to give the courts extra attention. Ms. Bagley also invited Mrs. Jones to the Park Board meeting to share her concerns. Mrs. Jones thanked Ms. Bagley for contacting the police and letting her know about the Board meeting. Some of her neighbors came to the meeting too. She had a petition signed by neighbors who could not attend the meeting. She summarized some of the issues at the park which include cars driving fast up and down Greenfield Street, loud and foul language from people using the court, dumping trash cans and turning over picnic tables, alcohol bottles and pot wrappers near the court. She and her neighbors do not feel comfortable using the park. She has talked with Ms. Bagley and the police about it at different times. It gets a little better, but the problem keeps coming back. She tried to get a record of all the calls to the police over the past summers, but it seemed like all the calls were not logged in on the system. Most times the neighbors called in on the routine number not 911. She suggested one idea to help resolve the problem could be to remove the basketball rims for a period of time to try and discourage this group of young men from using the court. Neighbors want some help from the police to patrol the neighborhood and make the park safe for the families in the area.

Dennis Michaud – 88 Hillsdale Avenue.

He spoke as a representative of the group and explained more of their concerns to Board members. They feel the quality of life is not good in their neighborhood. The court is attracting young men who drive there and take over the court and do not allow anyone else to use it. They intimidate people using the park and have even threatened a neighborhood kid. The families are not using the court or playground. They want the park used for the neighborhood. They have called the police. The neighbors do not see much improvement. Usually the young men arrive around 3:00 p.m. and stay till 9:00 p.m. They race their cars up and down street, work on their cars in the park driveway and appear to drink and smoke pot. Sometimes they hang out till 10:00 or 11:00 p.m. This hanging out has happened in the past and the neighbors do not want to see it get started this year. They are trying to be proactive with the Parks and Recreation Department and the police. Parents are concerned about the safety of their kids in the park and will not let them come to the park without an adult. Even the adults do not feel safe using the park. He was not sure that taking down the rims was a good solution, because the kids in the neighborhood want to use the court.

Jessica Butler – 44 Park Avenue.

She is concerned about the neighborhood not being able to use the park. This problem has been getting worse since 2010 when the young men first started hanging out in the park.

Kelly Clark – 54 Hillsdale Avenue.

She would like to see signs posted with the park hours and prohibiting foul language, drugs and alcohol.

Board members discussed these issues with the neighbors. Board members want to make sure that the park is available to the neighbors in the area and is a safe place to play. Chairperson Ragonese felt that a lot of these issues needed to be discussed with the police. They will need to be involved in helping to resolve these issues. Chairperson Ragonese suggested a meeting with representatives from the Police Department. He asked Ms. Bagley to talk with the police chief and see if he would be willing to have a meeting on this issue. Ms. Bagley will contact the chief, fill him in on this issue and look to coordinate a meeting with the police and neighbors. Chairperson Ragonese asked Ms. Bagley to notify the Board members about the meeting date too. He thanked the neighbors for attending the meeting and Ms. Bagley will get in touch with them after she talks with the police chief.

Chairperson Ragonese summed up the concerns of the residents by noting that neighborhood children and residents cannot use or enjoy the park and the group is intimidating people and possibly threatening people who want to use the park. He explained that we will need to work with the police to resolve the neighbor's issues. Board members discussed a similar problem a few years ago with the Mill Woods basketball court. Some of the same problems were happening at these courts and the police had to be proactive at the park to resolve the problem. Hopefully, the same police action can be used for these courts too.

B. Minutes – February 28, 2013.

Tom Mull moved to approve the minutes of the February 28, 2013 monthly meeting. The motion was seconded by Jeremy Donnelly and approved unanimously.

C. Monthly Report – February 2013.

The Monthly Report was reviewed by Board members.

D. Letters and Announcements.

1. Good 'Ole Fishing Derby for Kids – April 13, Spring Street Pond, 8 a.m. to noon.

Ms. Bagley discussed the Fishing Derby at Spring Street Pond. The pond will be stocked with trout a few days before the event and usually attracts 100 children.

2. Press Release on Cove Dredging from State Representative Morin's Office.

Chairperson Ragonese reported the exciting news of the Town receiving a state grant of \$1.1 million to dredge the channel at the Cove. He will be sending a thank you letter to members of our state legislative delegation for supporting this project. Representative Morin sent out this press release announcing the award.

E. Old Business.

1. Mill Woods Beach Drainage Project.

Chairperson Ragonese asked Ms. Bagley for an update on this project. She reported that the low bid is within budget and going to the Town Council for award on April 1. The low bidder is Running Brook Farms, Killingworth, CT. Total project cost is \$170,966. This project will provide drainage for the Mill Woods Beach and prevent the beach from washing out into the swim area. This project is scheduled to be completed at the beginning of June.

2. Willard Pool Project – Replace Chlorine Delivery System.

Chairperson Ragonese asked Ms. Bagley for a status report. The contractor has submitted all his paperwork. The purchase order is being processed and the contractor is ready to start the project.

3. New Town Website – Parks and Recreation Website – wethersfieldct.com.

Ms. Bagley told the Board about the town's new website. She explained that a great deal of information for the Parks and Recreation Department is on the new site. At a previous park board meeting, a Board member suggested that we provide links from the Park and Recreation page to the websites of the youth sport groups in Town and other community groups we interact with. These links now exist on the new website. She encouraged Board members to check out the site.

F. New Business.

1. Soccerpalooza Event in Mill Woods Park – August 3 & 4, 2013.

Ms. Bagley reported that the George D. Ritchie Soccer Club is again hosting a soccer tournament in Mill Woods Park this summer. Instead of holding a local tournament, they are hosting a regional tournament. Winners in each age group qualify to go to Disney World in Florida for the finals. The club is working with the CT Convention and Sports Bureau to plan the event. They expect about the same number of teams over the two days.

2. Softball Fields #3 & #4.

Ms. Bagley reported that Physical Services will be completing the drainage work on these fields in the spring. They will clean up the loose rock that sits on the top of the drain by the driveway near field #3. They will look at the access path to field #4 from the parking lot by the Dog Park. This access path had to be closed due to erosion on the path. Once the drainage work is done, staff will evaluate how to fix the access path.

G. Board Member Comments.

None.

H. Harbor Management Commission.

1. Harbormaster Report.

Chairperson Ragonese reviewed the Harbormaster report emailed to the Commission by Harbormaster Charlie Forsdick. The report discussed the good news about the state grant to dredge the Cove channel and that the new dock system, moorings and navigation aids are pending the contract from the State Department of Energy and Environmental Protection with funds from the Boating Infrastructure Grant. The report stated that the Harbormaster boat is currently being repaired at Boat Works and will be ready for use at the beginning of the boating season. The Harbormaster is working with Mr. Walter to determine the best way to moor his boat in the Cove for the upcoming season. Chairperson Ragonese reported that Mr. Forsdick is in email contact with Mr. Walter and they are exploring options. Mr. Forsdick has recommended that further discussion take place at the Harbor Management Commission meeting in May. Board members agreed with this recommendation. It will be placed on the agenda for the May meeting.

2. Boating Infrastructure Grant.

Ms. Bagley reported that she has spoken with people at the State and they are working on the contract.

I. Motion to Adjourn.

A motion was made by Richard Lepore and seconded by Tom Mull to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 p.m. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen A. Bagley, Director
Parks & Recreation Department